



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Afghan Partnership in the OSCE

Delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes to the
Permanent Council, Vienna
April 3, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is pleased that the OSCE has decided to grant partnership status to Afghanistan, but I would be remiss if I failed to note that we only wish that this step could have been taken sooner. Afghanistan is an issue which affects all of us, but especially those OSCE participating States that border it, and those states which have undertaken the long, arduous, and c -pensive task of helping rebuild Afghanistan's physical infrastructure, its economy and its political system following almost a quarter century of conflict.

Allow me to share at this point, that we sit here in Vienna, somewhat isolated from the conflicts that have taken place in other parts of the world. But we must be careful that the physical distance does not become metaphysical, and that we render assistance that is theoretical but lacks concreteness. Theory may feed the mind and perhaps even the soul, but not the body.

Let me remind you that, in the mid-1990s, the OSCE did little to help the Balkans until after the Dayton Accords were signed. The Budapest Summit in 1994 -- doing nothing about the Balkans while fighting raged only a few kilometers away -- came closer than most of us realize to relegating the OSCE to the past before it even found its beginning. We cannot let that happen again.

We believe there are a range of ways that the OSCE might assist and work with the government in Afghanistan that is coming into being. Our Police Advisor, our Economic Coordinator, and especially the capabilities we have developed with our Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, all have skills and present opportunities that Afghanistan can profit from.

Moreover, fulfilling these potentials can also help the OSCE -- giving it renewed relevance to the stability and security of the Central Asian states that are members of our organization.

Here, as elsewhere, Americans are urged to pursue multi-lateral solutions to the problems that confront security and stability worldwide. If the decision we have

adopted today is implemented with flexibility and vigor, that will help sustain the argument in favor of multi-lateral diplomacy.

If, on the other hand, it is implemented only in a formalistic way, with constant calls for abiding by imagined "rules" that would keep us from accomplishing anything, any argument to pursue multi-lateral solutions to genuine security problems becomes increasingly difficult to sustain, certainly to our government.

The United States believes that this decision could form an important turning point in our organization's efforts to promote security and stability. We urge the Permanent Council, the Secretary General, the OSCE institutions and Bodies to implement this decision rapidly, flexibly, aggressively, and with due regard for the opportunity this decision offers not only for Afghans but for the OSCE. We look forward to working with all of you to do just that.

If we want this organization to be important, and many of us who care deeply about the human condition and about the opportunity for our citizens for a better material life, want OSCE to be important, we must do the things that are important. Meaningful and rapid implementation of today's decision would be important.

Thank you.